

Great Sierra River Cleanup a Success

Friday, September 28, 2012



Steve Arata & Jeff Evans unload 1946 vehicle frame.
Photo Credit: Connie Nielson

According to a Marine Debris Timeline found on the Environmental Protection Agency's website, a disposable diaper can last 450 years in the water; foam cups and plastic bottles, 50 years; aluminum cans 200 years; and microfilament fishing line 600 years.

On September 15, over 30 Great Sierra River Clean Up volunteers contributed a morning of their time to clean up beaches, campgrounds, swimming holes and shorelines in the Merced River Canyon. The group included thirteen students from UC Merced and two young children who were participating for the second year. A total of 1,283 pounds of trash and debris was collected, including the frame of a 1946 Ford. 95% of the total collected is recyclable! Statewide, over 3,300 volunteers converged on the waterways in the nine major watersheds that provide 65% of California's drinking water. They removed more than 96,000 pounds of trash and recyclables.

Pollution of our waterways from soil erosion, storm runoff, use of chemicals and improper disposal of waste can be prevented. But even when clean water enters our rivers it is still susceptible to contamination from the activities of millions of people in our beautiful recreation areas. Since the first Kim Evans Memorial Clean Up in 2001, over 40,000 pounds of vehicles, vehicle parts, boilers, culverts, appliances, trash and recyclables have been removed from the Upper Merced River and tributaries during annual volunteer clean up events. While most large items have now been removed, garbage, diapers, cigarettes and other trash are left each year to foul the water.

Taking part in a clean up event like the Great Sierra River Clean Up, or just leaving a fishing, swimming, boating or picnic area clean after a day of fun, are ways to protect drinking water and wildlife, and make the Upper Merced River Watershed a place that provides enjoyment for residents and contributes to the local economy by attracting and welcoming visitors.



UC Merced students arrive ready to work. *Photo Credit: Anne Steed*

The Kim Evans Memorial Great Sierra River Clean Up is a joint effort of the **Sierra Nevada Conservancy**, Sierra Foothill Conservancy, Don Evans, Bureau of Land Management, Upper Merced River Watershed Council, Yosemite Area Audubon, and Mariposans for Responsible Government. Mariposa County Land Fill waived disposal fees for the event.

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Don Evans and BLM Ranger Aaron Fouch map out work areas. *Photo Credit: Anne Steed*